AN EPISTLE

OF THE

Knowledge and Characters of Men:

TO

RICHARD Lord *COBHAM*,

By Mr. *POPE*.

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AN

EPISTLE

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD Lord Viſc^t. *COBHAM.*

By Mr. *POPE.*

Eſt Brevitate opus, ut currat ſententia, neu ſe
Impediat verbis laſſas onerantibus aures;
Et Sermone opus eſt, modo triſti, ſæpe jocoſo,
Defendente vicem modo Rhetoris, atque Poetæ,
Interdum Urbani, parcentis viribus, atque
Extenuantis eas conſulto. ——

HOR. SAT. 10. Lib. 1.

LONDON:

Printed for LAWTON GILLIVER, at *Homer*'s *Head* againſt St. *Dunſtan*'s Church in *Fleetſtreet*, 1733. [Price one Shilling.]

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To the Right Honourable

RICHARD Lord Viſc^t. *COBHAM.*

YES, you deſpiſe the Man to books confin'd,
Who from his Study rails at human kind;
Tho' what he learns he ſpeaks, and may advance
Some gen'ral Maxims, or be right by Chance.
The coxcomb Bird, ſo talkative and grave,
That from his Cage cries Cuckold, Whore, and Knave,
Tho' many a Paſſenger he rightly call,
You hold him no Philoſopher at all.

And yet the fate of all Extremes is ſuch,
Men may be read, as well as Books, too much.
To Obſervations which our ſelves we make,
We grow more partial for th' Obſerver's ſake;
To written Wiſdom, as another's, leſs:
Maxims are drawn from Notions, thoſe from Gueſs.
There's ſome *Peculiar* in each Leaf and Grain;
Some unmark'd Fibre, or ſome varying Vein:
Shall only Man be taken in the groſs?
Grant but as many ſorts of Mind, as * Moſs.
That each from other differs, firſt confeſs;
Next, that he varies from himſelf no leſs:
Add Nature's, Cuſtom's, Reaſon's, Paſſion's ſtrife,
And all Opinion's Colours caſt on Life.
Yet more; the diff'rence is as great between
The Optics ſeeing, as the Objects ſeen.
All Manners take a tincture from our own,
Or come diſcolour'd thro' our Paſſions ſhown,
Or Fancy's beam inlarges, multiplies,
Contracts, inverts, and gives ten thouſand dyes.

* There are above 300 Sorts of Moſs obſerved by Naturaliſts.

Our

Our Depths who fathoms, or our Shallows finds?
Quick Whirls, and ſhifting Eddies, of our minds?
Life's Stream for Obſervation will not ſtay,
It hurries all too faſt to mark their way.
In vain ſedate reflections we would make,
When half our knowledge we muſt ſnatch, not take.
On human Actions reaſon tho' you can,
It may be Reaſon, but it is not Man:
His Principle of Action once explore,
That inſtant 'tis his Principle no more;
Like following Life thro' Creatures you diſſect,
You loſe it, in the moment you detect.
Oft, in the Paſſions wild rotation toſt,
Our Spring of Action to our ſelves is loſt:
Tir'd, not determin'd, to the laſt we yield,
And what comes then is maſter of the field.
As the laſt Image of that troubled heap,
When ſenſe ſubſides, and fancy ſports in ſleep,
(Tho' paſt the recollection of the thought)
Becomes the ſtuff of which our Dream is wrought;
Something, as dim to our internal view,
Is thus perhaps the cauſe of all we do.

In vain the grave, with retroſpective eye,
Would from th' apparent *what* conclude the *why*,
Infer the Motive from the Deed, and ſhow
That what we *chant'd*, was what we *meant*, to do.
Behold! if Fortune, or a Miſtreſs frowns,
Some plunge in buſ'neſs, others ſhave their crowns:
To eaſe the ſoul of one oppreſſive weight,
This quits an Empire, that embroils a State:
The ſame aduſt Complection has impell'd
* *Charles* to the Convent, *Philip* to the Field.

Not always *Actions* ſhew the Man: we find,
Who does a kindneſs is not therefore kind;
Perhaps Proſperity becalm'd his breaſt;
Perhaps the Wind juſt ſhifted from the Eaſt.
Not always humble he who ſeeks Retreat,
Pride guides his ſteps, and bids him ſhun the Great.
Who combats bravely, is not therefore brave;
He dreads a Death-bed like the meaneſt ſlave.
Who reaſons wiſely, is not therefore wiſe;
His pride in res'aoning, not in acting lies.

* CHARLES V. PHILIP II.

But grant that Actions beſt diſcover Man;
Take the moſt *ſtrong*, and *ſort* them as you can:
The *few* that glare, each Character muſt mark,
You balance not the *many* in the dark.
What will you do with ſuch as diſagree?
Suppreſs them, or miſcall them Policy?
Muſt then at once (the Character to ſave)
A plain, rough Hero turn a crafty Knave?
Alas! in truth the man but chang'd his mind,
Perhaps was ſick, in love, or had not din'd.
Ask how from *Britain Cæſar* made retreat?
Cæſar perhaps had told you, he was beat.
The mighty *Czar* what mov'd to wed a Punk?
The mighty *Czar* might anſwer, he was drunk.
But ſage Hiſtorians! 'tis your task to prove
One action Conduct, one Heroic Love.
'Tis from *high Life*, high Characters are drawn;
A Saint in Crape is twice a Saint in Lawn;
A Judge is juſt, a Chanc'lor juſter ſtill;
A Gownman learn'd; a Biſhop, what you will:
Wiſe, if a Miniſter; but if a King,
More wiſe, more learn'd, more juſt, more ev'ry thing.

Court-Virtues bear, like Gems, the higheſt rate,
Born where Heav'ns influence ſcarce can penetrate.
In Life's low vale, (the ſoil the Virtues like)
They pleaſe as Beauties, here as Wonders ſtrike.
Tho' the ſame Sun with all-diffuſive rays
Bluſh in the Roſe, and in the Diamond blaze,
We prize the ſtronger effort of his pow'r,
And always ſet the Gem above the Flow'r.

'Tis *Education* forms the vulgar mind;
Juſt as the Twig is bent, the Tree's inclin'd.
Boaſtful and rough, your firſt Son is a Squire;
The next, a Trades-man, meek, and much a Liar;
Tom ſtruts a Soldier, open, bold and brave;
Will ſneaks a Scriv'ner, an exceeding Knave:
Is he a Churchman? then he's fond of pow'r;
A Quaker? ſly; a Presbyterian? ſour;
A ſmart Free-thinker? all things in an hour.

True, ſome are open and to all men known;
Others ſo very cloſe, they're hid from none;
(So Darkneſs fills the eye no leſs than Light)
Thus gracious CHANDOS is belov'd at ſight:

And ev'ry Child hates *Shylock*, tho' his Soul
Still ſits at ſquat, and peeps not from its hole.
At half mankind when gen'rous *Manly* raves,
All know 'tis Virtue, for he thinks them Knaves:
When univerſal homage *Umbra* pays,
All ſee 'tis Vice, and itch of vulgar praiſe.
Who but deteſts th' Endearments of *Courtine*?
While *One* there is, who charms us with his *Spleen*.
But theſe plain Characters we rarely find,
Tho' ſtrong the Bent, yet quick the Turns of mind.
Here puzzling Contraries confound the whole,
There Affectations quite reverſe the ſoul:
The dull, flat Falſehood ſerves for Policy,
And in the Cunning, Truth itſelf's a Lye;
Unthought of Frailties cheat us in the Wiſe;
The Fool lies hid in Inconſiſtencies.
See the ſame Man, in vigour, in the gout;
Alone, in company; in place, or out;
Early at Bus'neſs, and at Hazard late;
Mad at a fox-chaſe, wiſe at a debate;
Drunk at a borough; civil at a ball;
Friendly at *Hackney*, faithleſs at *Whitehall*.

Catius

Catius is ever moral, ever grave,
Thinks who endures a knave, is next a knave;
Save juſt at Dinner — then prefers, no doubt,
A Rogue with Ven'ſon to a Saint without.

Who would not praiſe *Patritio*'s high deſert?
His hand unſtain'd, his uncorrupted heart,
His comprehenſive head? all Int'reſts weigh'd,
All *Europe* ſav'd, yet *Britain* not betray'd?
He thanks you not; his pride was in Piquette,
Newmarket-fame, and judgment at a Bett.

What made (ſay *Montagne*, or more ſage *Charron!*)
Otho a Warrior, *Cromwell* a Buffoon?
A perjur'd Prince a *leaden Saint* revere?
A god-leſs Regent tremble at a *Star?*
The Throne a *Bigot* keep, a *Genius* quit,
Faithleſs thro' Piety, and dup'd thro' Wit?
Europe, a Woman, Child, or Dotard rule;
And juſt her *ableſt* Monarch made a fool?

Know, God and Nature only are the ſame:
In Man, the judgment ſhoots at flying Game;
A Bird of paſſage! loſt, as ſoon as found;
Now in the Moon perhaps, now under ground.

Ask mens Opinions: *J**n* now ſhall tell
How trade increaſes, and the world goes well;
Strike off his Penſion by the ſetting Sun,
And *Britain*, if not *Europe*, is undone.

Manners with Fortunes, *Humours* change with Climes,
Tenets with Books, and *Principles* with Times.

Judge we by *Nature*? Habit can efface,
Int'reſt o'ercome, or Policy take place:
By *Actions*? thoſe Uncertainty divides:
By *Paſſions*? theſe Diſſimulation hides:
Affections? they ſtill take a wider range:
Find, if you can, in what you cannot change?

'Tis in the *ruling Paſſion*: there, alone,
The wild are conſtant, and the cunning known,
The fool conſiſtent, and the falſe ſincere;
Prieſts, Princes, Women, no Diſſemblers here.
This Clue once found unravels all the reſt;
The Proſpect clears, and *Clodio* ſtands confeſt.
Clodio, the Scorn and Wonder of our days,
Whoſe ruling paſſion was the *Luſt of Praiſe*;
Born with whate'er could win it from the wiſe,
Women and Fools muſt like him, or he dies.

Tho' wond'ring Senates hung on all he ſpoke,
The Club muſt hail him Maſter of the *Joke*.
Shall parts ſo various aim at nothing new?
He'll ſhine a *Tully*, and a *Wilmot* too:
Then turns repentant, and his God adores
With the ſame Spirit that he drinks and whores:
Enough, if all around him but admire,
And now the Punk applaud, and now the Fry'r.
Thus, with each gift of Nature and of Art,
And wanting nothing but an honeſt heart;
Grown all to all, from no one Vice exempt,
And moſt contemptible to ſhun Contempt;
His Paſſion ſtill to covet gen'ral praiſe,
His Life, to forfeit it a thouſand ways;
His conſtant Bounty no one friend has made;
His Angel Tongue no mortal can perſuade:
A Fool, with more of Wit than half mankind,
Too raſh for Thought, for Action too refin'd:
A Tyrant to the Wife his heart approves;
A Rebel to the very King he loves;
He dies, ſad out-caſt of each Church and State!
And (harder ſtill) flagitious, yet not great!

Ask

Ask you why *Clodio* broke thro' every rule?
'Twas all for fear, the Knaves ſhou'd call him Fool.

Nature well known, no Miracles remain,
Comets are regular, and *Clodio* plain.
Yet, in the ſearch, the wiſeſt may miſtake,
If ſecond Qualities for firſt they take.
When *Catiline* by rapine ſwell'd his ſtore,
When *Cæſar* made a noble Dame a whore,
In this the Luſt, in that the Avarice
Were means, not ends; Ambition was the Vice.
That very *Cæſar*, born in *Scipio*'s days,
Had aim'd, like him, by Chaſtity at praiſe:
Lucullus, when Frugality could charm,
Had roaſted Turnips in the *Sabin* farm:
In vain th' Obſerver eyes the Builder's toil,
But quite miſtakes the *Scaffold* for the *Pile*.

In this one Paſſion Man can ſtrength enjoy,
As Fits give vigour, juſt when they deſtroy.
Time, that on all things lays his lenient hand,
Yet tames not this: it ſticks to our laſt ſand.

Con-

Conſiſtent in our follies, and our ſins,
Here honeſt Nature ends as ſhe begins.
Behold a rev'rend Sire, whom Want of Grace
Has made the Father of a Nameleſs Race,
Crawl thro' the Street, ſhov'd on, or rudely preſs'd
By his own Sons, that paſs him by un-bleſs'd!
Still to his Wench he creeps, on knocking knees,
And envies ev'ry Sparrow that he ſees.
A Salmon's Belly, *Helluo*, was thy Fate.
The Doctor call'd declares all help too late.
Mercy! cries *Helluo*, mercy on my Soul!
Is there no hope? alas!—then bring the Jowl.
"Odious! in *Woollen!* 'twou'd a Saint provoke,
(Were the laſt words that poor *Narciſſa* ſpoke)
"No, let a charming Chintz, and *Bruſſels* lace
"Wrap my cold limbs, and ſhade my lifeleſs face:
"One wou'd not, ſure, be frightful when one's dead—
"And, *Betty!* give this Cheek a little Red.
Old Politicians chew on Wiſdom paſt,
And blunder on in Buſ'neſs to the laſt;
As weak as earneſt; and as gravely *out*,
As ſober *L*l* w*, dancing in the Gout.

The Courtier ſmooth, who forty years had ſhin'd
An humble Servant to all Human kind,
Juſt brought out this, when ſcarce his tongue cou'd ſtir,
"If — where I'm going — I could ſerve you, Sir?"
"I give and I deviſe (old *Euclio* ſaid,
And ſigh'd) "my Lands and Tenements to *Ned.*"
Your Money Sir? "My Money Sir! what all?
"Why — if I muſt — (then wept) I give it *Paul.*"
The Mannor, Sir? — "The Mannor! hold, he cry'd,
"Not that — I cannot part with that" — and dy'd.

And You! brave COBHAM, to the lateſt breath
Shall feel your *ruling Paſſion* ſtrong in Death:
Such in thoſe moments, as in All the paſt,
"Oh ſave my Country, Heav'n!" ſhall be your laſt.

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